Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
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Violet Wood-sorrel

Oxalis violacea

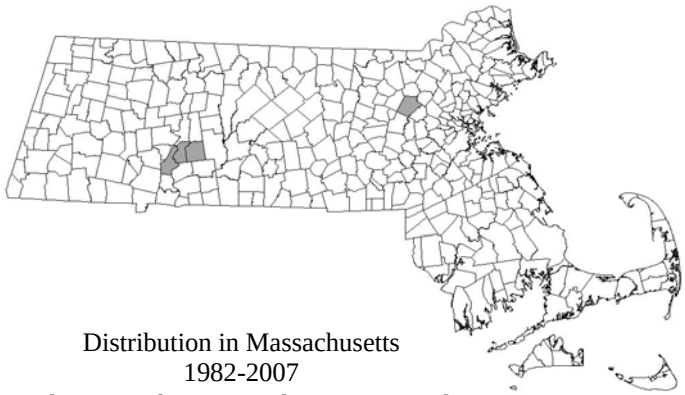
State Status: **Endangered**
Federal Status: None

Gleason, H.A. 1952. *The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*. Published for the NY Botanical Garden by Hafner Press. New York.

Description: Violet Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis violacea*) is a low perennial herb of rich, open woodland slopes. A member of the wood-sorrel family (Oxalidaceae), it has heart-shaped, often purple-tinged leaflets and purplish flowers that bloom from late May to early June.

Aids to identification: Violet Wood-sorrel is stemless, up 10 inches (25 cm) in height, with leaves and flower stalks arising from a scaly bulbous base. The leaves are mostly hairless (glabrous), and are compound with three heart-shaped leaflets that are tinged with purple. The flowers are rose-violet, with five petals, and are about 0.4 to 0.75 inches (1–2 cm) in length. They are borne in an umbel atop a stalk 4 to 8 inches (10 to 20 cm) in height, overtopping the leaves.

Similar species: Common Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis montana*) resembles Violet Wood-sorrel in that it is low-growing and stemless, with heart-shaped leaflets. Common Wood-sorrel, however, is found in cool, acidic community types, such as spruce-fir forests. It has solitary white flowers that are veined with pink. Other wood-sorrels of Massachusetts (*O. corniculata, O. dilenii*, and *O. stricta*) have a stem and yellow flowers.



Distribution in Massachusetts
1982-2007
Based on records in Natural Heritage Database

Habitat in Massachusetts: In Massachusetts, Violet Wood-sorrel inhabits dry or moist rich soils of open deciduous woodlands over circumneutral bedrock. Associated plant species include hickories (*Carya* spp.), Hop Hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*), Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*), Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), White Wood-aster (*Eurybia divaricata*), Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), Hepatica (*Anemone americana*), and Sessile-leaved Bellwort (*Uvularia sessilifolia*).

Threats: Violet Wood-sorrel requires partial sun exposure; therefore, forest maturation and canopy closure, resulting from a lack of natural or anthropogenic disturbance, often casts too much shade. Invasive exotic plant species may over-shade or out-compete Violet Wood-sorrel at some sites. Habitats along trails may be threatened by trampling damage.

Flowering time in Massachusetts

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
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Range: The range of Violet Wood-sorrel extends from Connecticut and Massachusetts west to North Dakota, and south to New Mexico, Arizona, and the Gulf Coast states. It is also rare in Connecticut, Michigan, New York, and Rhode Island. It is historically known from Vermont.

Population status in Massachusetts: Violet Wood-sorrel is listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act as Endangered. All listed species are legally protected from killing, collection, possession, or sale, and from activities that would destroy habitat and thus directly or indirectly cause mortality or disrupt critical behaviors. Violet Wood-sorrel is currently known from Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, and Middlesex, Counties, and is historically known from Essex and Worcester Counties.

Management recommendations: As with many rare species, the exact management needs of Violet Wood-sorrel are not known. Sites should be monitored for over-shading caused by forest succession, and for invasive plant species. Habitat sites that do not receive enough light can be managed with canopy thinning or prescribed burning. If trampling or erosion are threats in recreational areas, trails can be stabilized or re-routed. To avoid inadvertent harm to rare plants, all active management of rare plant populations (including invasive species removal) should be planned in consultation with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.

Updated June 2007